

Draft Standards for the Treatment of a Distinct Cultural Resource

In June 1994, a Focus Group of over 40 museum professionals met to draft standards and treatment options for historic furnished interiors based upon scholarship, sound planning, and with a commitment to cultural resource stewardship. The meeting, held at the National Trust property Clivden, was sponsored by the Historic Site Administrators Committee (HSA) of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (MAAM), and was hosted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service's Northeast Museum Services Center. The resulting draft standards presented here were modeled after *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, in an effort to provide the same level of nationally-recognized standards for furnished interiors as has long existed for historic structures.

This effort is still very much a work in progress and HSA welcomes your comments and suggestions. Future plans include:

- Continued dissemination of the draft standards to other museum professionals through other meetings and publications;
- Development of a decision-making process flow chart;

- Solicitation of NPS support for further refinement of the draft standards;
- Preparation of specific guidelines for "recommended" and "not recommended" application of treatments, similar to the *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, possibly using the format of *Interpreting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, which provides case studies and illustrations.

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DRAFT STANDARDS

Introduction

The furnished historic interior is an important and distinct cultural resource made up of the combination of fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement presented within a historic context. Together these elements convey significant and unique information about historical occupancy and use.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties have typically been applied to one historic resource or a variety of historic resource types, including; a single building; a complex of buildings such as a house, garage and barn; a site, with a designed landscape, natural features, and archeological components; structures such as a system of roadways and paths or a bridge; and objects such as fountains and statuary.

Although the *Secretary's Standards* could be applied to furnished historic interiors, they do not specifically address the ensemble as a whole. Unfortunately, no other guidance with the weight or professional recognition of the *Secretary's Standards* exists for the evaluation and preservation of the furnished historic interior. As a result, original fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement are often ignored, dispersed, or destroyed during the architectural evaluation and treatment process.

The need for a coherent preservation philosophy that recognizes the significance of furnished historic interiors led the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums' Historic Site Administrators Committee (HSA) to develop these draft standards. They draw heavily on the *Secretary's Standards* with the hope that the commonly accepted preservation philosophy and language used for historic properties will be adopted for furnished historic interiors. Using these guidelines, preservationists and historic site man-

agers will promote the protection and preservation of an important, and too often ignored cultural resource type.

Treatments

There are Standards for four distinct, but interrelated, approaches to the treatment of furnished historic interiors: Preservation, Restoration, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation.

Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of an interior's form as it has evolved over time.

Restoration is undertaken to depict an interior at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

Reconstruction recreates vanished or non-surviving interiors for interpretive purposes.

Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic interior to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the interior's historic character.

Choosing an appropriate treatment for a furnished historic interior, whether preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction is critical and must be carefully considered. Because of the complexity and the variable elements within a furnished historic interior, few will fall exclusively within one definition. The decision making process must therefore evaluate the property's historical significance, its physical condition and integrity, its proposed use, and its intended interpretation. Site specific documentation and physical evidence should always take precedence in selecting a treatment option.

General Standards Adapted for the Treatment of Furnished Historic Interiors [1]

- (1) The use of historic interiors shall maximize the preservation of fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement. These interiors shall interpret historic uses where possible or be placed in new uses that maximizes the preservation of historic fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement.
- (2) Distinctive qualities or character of a historic interior shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of historic material or distinctive features shall be avoided. If removal or alteration is unavoidable, reversibility and thorough documentation are required.
- (3) Historic furnished interiors shall be recognized as products of their complete history. Internally logical and consistent treatment decisions must be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. Alterations without a historic basis shall be discouraged.
- (4) Changes over time are evidence of the history and development of a historic interior. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
- (5) The distinctive materials, construction techniques, and examples of craftsmanship that characterize a furnished interior shall be preserved.
- (6) Deteriorated fabric, features, finishes, and furnishings shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement, the new fabric, features, finishes, and furnishings shall match that which is being replaced in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence and properly recorded.
In instances where fabric, features, finishes, and furnishings are placed at risk or subject to consumptive use, appropriate action shall be taken to ensure their preservation.
- (7) Professionally accepted standards for the preservation (e.g. conservation, preventive maintenance, and housekeeping) of fabric, features, finishes and furnishings must be applied.
Treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. Care must be taken to provide an environment that balances the needs of the structure and furnishings.

PRESERVATION

is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing character, integrity, and materials of a furnished historic interior including the fabric, features, finishes, furnishing, and room arrangement. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials rather than extensive replacement and new construction. As it becomes necessary to protect fragile materials (e.g. textiles, paper, etc.) accurate, documented replacements will be used.

Preservation should be considered as the preferred treatment when:

- The historic interior's distinctive fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement are essentially intact and thus convey the historic significance without extensive replacement;
- a continuing or new use does not require additions or extensive alteration.

Prior to undertaking work, a documentation plan for preservation should be developed.

Standards for Preservation:

1. A furnished historic interior shall be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, an interior shall be documented and protected, and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of an interior shall be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a furnished interior shall be avoided.
3. Each furnished historic interior shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features shall be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Changes to an interior that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a furnished historic interior shall be preserved.
6. The existing conditions of historic elements shall be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive element, the new material shall match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatment that causes damage to historic materials shall not be used.

RESTORATION

is defined as the act or process of accurately presenting the character, integrity, and materials of a furnished historic interior as it appeared at a particular period of time by the removal of fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement from later periods in its history, and the reconstruction and replacement of missing elements from the restoration period.

Restoration should be considered as the preferred treatment when:

- There is substantial physical and documentary evidence for the work;
- a particular time in the history of an interior is of unusual, architectural, and/or historical significance; when a substantial portion of original fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and evidence of room arrangement survive for a given period;
- the loss of extant materials and finishes that characterize other periods would be minimal.

Prior to undertaking work, a particular period of time, i.e., the restoration period, should be selected and justified, and a documentation plan for restoration developed.

Standards for Restoration:

1. A historic interior must reflect its use during a selected restoration period.
2. The historic character of a furnished interior shall be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a furnished historic interior shall be avoided.
3. Each furnished historic interior shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features shall be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and evidence of room arrangement that characterize other historical periods shall be documented prior to their alteration or removal, and retained whenever possible.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period shall be preserved. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize other historical periods shall be preserved whenever possible, and documented prior to their alteration or removal.
6. Deteriorated elements from the restoration period shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive element, the new element shall match the old in composition, design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.
7. Replacement of missing elements from the restoration period shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history shall not be created by adding conjectural elements, elements from other interiors, or by combining elements that never existed together historically.

8. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatment that causes damage to historic materials shall not be used.
9. Decorative schemes and designs that were never executed historically shall not be implemented.

RECONSTRUCTION

is defined as the act or process of assembling and replicating missing fabric, features, finishes, furnishings, and room arrangement to serve the purpose of depicting a furnished historic interior during a specific period of time. A reconstruction may be site specific or representative.

Reconstruction should be considered as the preferred treatment when:

- The depiction of missing components is required to understand and interpret a furnished interior of historical significance;
- there is enough site specific or generic historical documentation to ensure accurate depiction.

Prior to undertaking work a documentation plan for reconstruction should be developed.

Standards for Reconstruction:

1. Reconstruction shall be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a furnished historic interior when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the historic interior.
2. Reconstruction of a furnished historic interior shall be preceded by thorough research that identifies and evaluates those elements that are essential to an accurate reconstruction.
3. Reconstruction shall include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
4. Reconstruction shall be based on the accurate duplication of historic elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different elements from other historic interiors. A reconstructed furnished interior shall re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic elements in materials, design, color, and texture.
5. A reconstruction shall be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.
6. Decorative schemes and designs that were never executed historically shall not be implemented.

REHABILITATION

is defined as the adaptive reuse of an interior for purposes other than as a furnished historic interior, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Rehabilitation should be considered as the preferred treatment when:

- Substantial repair and replacement of deteriorated and or missing fabric, features, finishes, furnishings are necessary;
- alterations or additions to the furnished historic interior are planned for a new or continued use;
- the presentation of a furnished historic interior is not appropriate, feasible, advisable, or documentable.

Prior to undertaking work, a documentation plan for rehabilitation should be developed.

Standards for Rehabilitation:

1. A furnished historic interior shall be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of an interior shall be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a furnished interior shall be avoided.
3. Each furnished historic interior shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Adaptive reuse that creates a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic interiors shall not be undertaken.
4. Changes to an interior that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a furnished historic interior shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic elements shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive element, the new element shall match the old in composition, design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing elements shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatment that causes damage to historic materials shall not be used.